



A CHAPLET OF YEARS



always find the way to education, but the poor must have it brought to them at their very doors. God helping, I will organize a congregation of young women, whose aim will be threefold: first, to work out their own sanctification by taking the three vows of religion, and living under a common rule; second, to teach girls in boarding-schools, and accept control of district schools; third, to care for the sick, the poor, and the orphaned."

And so under the branches of the apple-trees, were laid the great lines from which St. Ann's Institute evolved. So well were they drawn that from Eastern Canada they have extended to farthest sunset west, and to midnight northwest.

In the after years, when the courageous foundress, having tasted the chalice of humiliation, could say to a novice, who was surprised that one who had done such great things should now be filling the retired office of sacristan, "The grain of mustard seed must be buried before it can grow into a large tree," did she remember the peaceful, Arcadian orchard interview with her brother?

This young man's insight into God's dealings towards His foremost workers, may sound far-fetched, but it should be borne in mind that in the surroundings and home of this man of the world, the lives of the Saints were familiar topics of reverent conversation.

But at that time, Miss Esther Blondin and trials were practically unacquainted. They had been kept apart by the kindness, the exquisite tact, the gracious dignity and beaming cordiality with which she conducted her young ladies' boarding-school. None but those versed in God's ways with His chosen friends could have foreseen that they should one day be interlocked.

The Cross, that badge of God's nearest and dearest, alone could have substituted voluntary trial and abnegation for Miss Blondin's hitherto peaceful course of life. She, too, knew God's ways with those who take up His livery; so it was not lightly that she balanced her advantageous position with the Cross, and freely relinquished the one to embrace the other.

Another voice, besides her brother's, prepared her by saintly warning for the difficulties of her pious enterprise. This was Bishop Bourget, to whom she explained in person the call she felt to sever herself more completely from the world and found a congregation of religious women, devoted to the Christian education of young girls.